

Godly Examples with Godly Advice, Part 1 - Acts 18:18-23 – January 18th, 2009

- Last week we left Paul preaching and church planting in the city of Corinth, where he will end up staying for a year and a half.
- Paul is about to end his 2nd missionary journey. He will begin his 3rd missionary journey after arriving at his home church in Antioch.

- I'm noticing something at this juncture in our study of the book of Acts; people like the Apostle Paul are sort of becoming good friends.
- I don't know how else to say it except that, as we get to know them, they can become more personable and even more personal to us.
- They seemingly rise from the pages of scripture and say to us, they're here with us, as examples to us, and with good advice for us.
- I've titled this study; "Godly Examples with Godly Advice." I believe Paul would have some good advice were he speaking here today.

1. Become all things to all people (Verse 18)

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken.

v18 Paul leaves Corinth for Syria along with Priscilla and Aquila, but not before having his hair cut in Cenchrea, because of a vow.

- Why does the Holy Spirit want us to know about the Apostle's appointment to have his hair cut? Do we need to know this?

- Yes, because this was a Nazirite vow, in which you let your hair grow, then cut it off and offer it to the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem.
- If you take the Nazirite vow, it is unlawful to let a scissors touch your hair, wine touch your lips, and you couldn't touch a dead body.
- Paul taking this vow has been the source of some controversy, because to do so was to step back into legalism and its requirements.

- This brings up an interesting question; "why did Paul do this?" "Do we still need to make vows like this?" No but, there's a lesson in this.
- Paul knew, in and of itself, the vow had no merit. He decided to do it in order to reach, preach and teach those who he hoped to save.
- I suppose you could say that this was not done out of a compromise, but out of a courtesy to the Jews who were still under the law.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. NIV

2. Preface everything with "Lord willing" (Verses 19-21)

19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

v19 Upon Paul's arrival in Ephesus, he leaves Priscilla and Aquila behind then goes right into the synagogue to reason with the Jews.

v20-21 He declines their request to spend more time there, but promises to return, "if it is God's will," then leaves for Caesarea.

- There's some speculation as to why Paul wanted to leave Ephesus, and we won't get into that. We'll let the scholars to debate that.
- The reason is that I think we would be better advised to, instead of looking at "why" Paul left Ephesus, look at "how" Paul left Ephesus.

- We do know that Paul will not only come back to Ephesus, but will actually spend three years there. We'll see this in the next chapter.
- Be that as it may, Paul doesn't assume he will come back to Ephesus, he wisely prefaces his promise to return with; "if it is God's will."

- Perhaps he remembers what happened two years earlier when the Holy Spirit prevented him from preaching in Ephesus. (Acts 16:6)
- The lesson here is clear; "God's delays may not be God's denials." In other words, it just may not be God's will "yet." Wait, you'll see!

James 4:13-16 13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. NIV

3. Work hard and don't waste time (Verses 22-23)

22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

v22 Paul lands at Caesarea, but quickly leaves for Jerusalem where he offered his hair in the temple, then to his home church in Antioch.

v23a We're told that he did spend some time in Antioch, but it seems that he was in a hurry to get to, and travel from, place to place.

v23b He travels throughout Galatia and Phrygia going from place to place and church to church so he can strengthen all the disciples.

"Paul probably spent about three months at Antioch-the whole section breathes an atmosphere of haste. For, although Paul might have needed a change and a rest, he was not one to dilly-dally and waste time."

John Phillips "Exploring Acts, v.2 p. 366

"After the defeat of the Jews before the judgment seat of Gallio Paul remained at Corinth for some time, and then sailed to Ephesus, where they desired him to remain; but he thought fit to proceed by vessel to Caesarea, and onward to Jerusalem. Thence he travelled again to Antioch, and set out on another tour. This indefatigable apostle was always at work, spending and being spent for the Lord Jesus."

Charles Spurgeon

- The bottom line is; Paul is working hard, and he's wasting no time, because there's no time to waste. The time is at hand.

Proverbs 18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. KJV

"Work while it is called today, for you know not how much you may be hindered tomorrow. One today is worth two tomorrows; never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today."

Benjamin Franklin

Mr. Meant-To has a comrade, and his name is Didn't-Do;
Have you ever chanced to meet them? Did they ever call on you?
These two fellows live together, in the house of don't know when;
And I'm told they have regrets, by the guilt of Might-Have-Been
Author Unknown

- Had Paul decided to just take it easy and kick back, his godly example and godly advice would have been in the "Might-Have-Been."
- How unspeakably grateful we are that what he did do back then, can be an example for us in what we can do now. Let's do it!!!